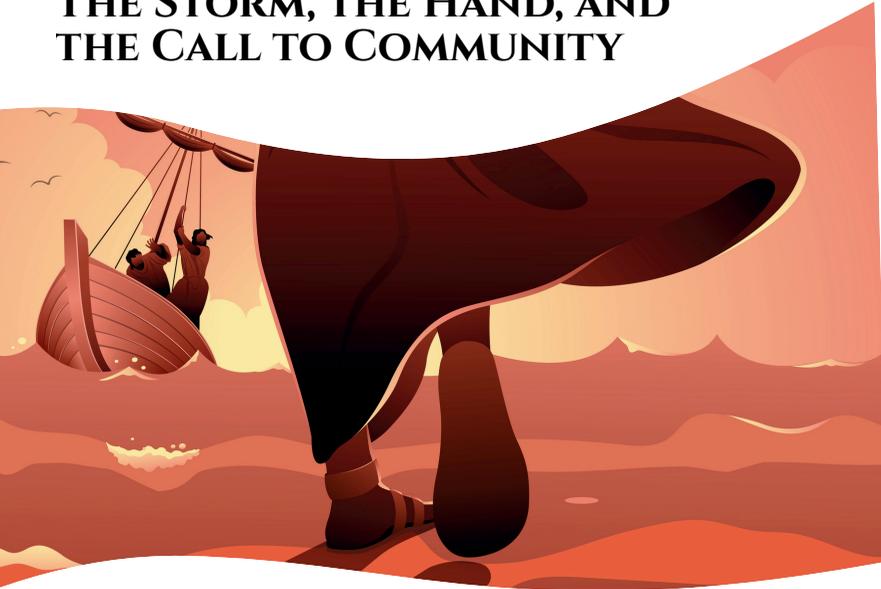


## THE STORM, THE HAND, AND THE CALL TO COMMUNITY



In the **deep of night**, the sea churned and the disciples' boat was tossed by **relentless winds**. **Fear gripped** their hearts as **shadows** closed in. Then, across the storm, came **Jesus, walking on the water**, His voice **steady and calm**: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." At His call, **Peter stepped out**, eyes fixed on his Lord, but when the **waves surged** and fear took hold, he began to sink until Jesus reached out His hand.

This **Gospel scene** is more than **history**. It is a **mirror of our time**. The **storms of life** are real—especially for our **young people**. The **boat** is our **Church**, often **battered** by **shifting cultural tides, uncertainty, and fear**. And **Christ continues** to come—**walking on the very waters** that threaten us—**inviting** us to trust, to step out, and to **form communities** that keep our eyes **fixed on Him**.

Across the **Caribbean** and the **AEC Region**, we live in **turbulent waters**. We are **navigating crises of identity, mental health struggles, unemployment, broken families, digital overload, and spiritual disconnection**. The **storm** is not **theoretical**. It is **deeply personal** for us.

And yet, as **advocates for the young**, we feel our cries go **unanswered and unheard**. Youth are seen as **passive recipients** rather than **protagonists** in the **life of the Church**. They often feel **unwelcomed, misunderstood, or judged**. One group said it best: "Listening to youth is essential—they are the pulse of the Church."

We believe this is not **mere sentiment**—it is a **prophetic insight** for the **Caribbean Church**.

**Creating safe spaces** is the first movement of **healing**. Spaces where **young people** feel **seen, respected, and free to express themselves**.

A **safe space** is not just **physical**—it is **spiritual, emotional, and communal**. It is where **trust** can grow and where **Christ can be encountered** in **authentic conversation**. Yet, our **listening** also calls us to **go deeper**. We must **listen not only with our ears, but with our hearts**.

We must become **aware** of our presumptions and prejudices, **suspend our judgments**, and allow the Spirit to shape us into companions rather than **instructors**.

In these **storms, listening** becomes the **first way we reach out our hand**, not as **companions who remain passive** but as **companions open to assuming the role of secondary formators and spiritual guides**.

As Peter **sank**, Jesus extended His hand—**not when the sea** was calm, but in the **midst** of the storm. In the same way, our youth ministry cannot wait for **perfect conditions**.

It must **act now**, offering **real and reliable structures of support**.

Again and again, we heard the **need for structure**—not as **bureaucracy**, but as **stability**. **Young people**—and those who **accompany them**—need a **consistent, unified approach to ministry across the region**.

The **structures we build** must:

- **Provide trained youth ministers** in every **diocese** who are **formed, mentored, and supported**
- **Develop standardized formation content** rooted in the **Gospel** and the **cultural realities** of our **young people**

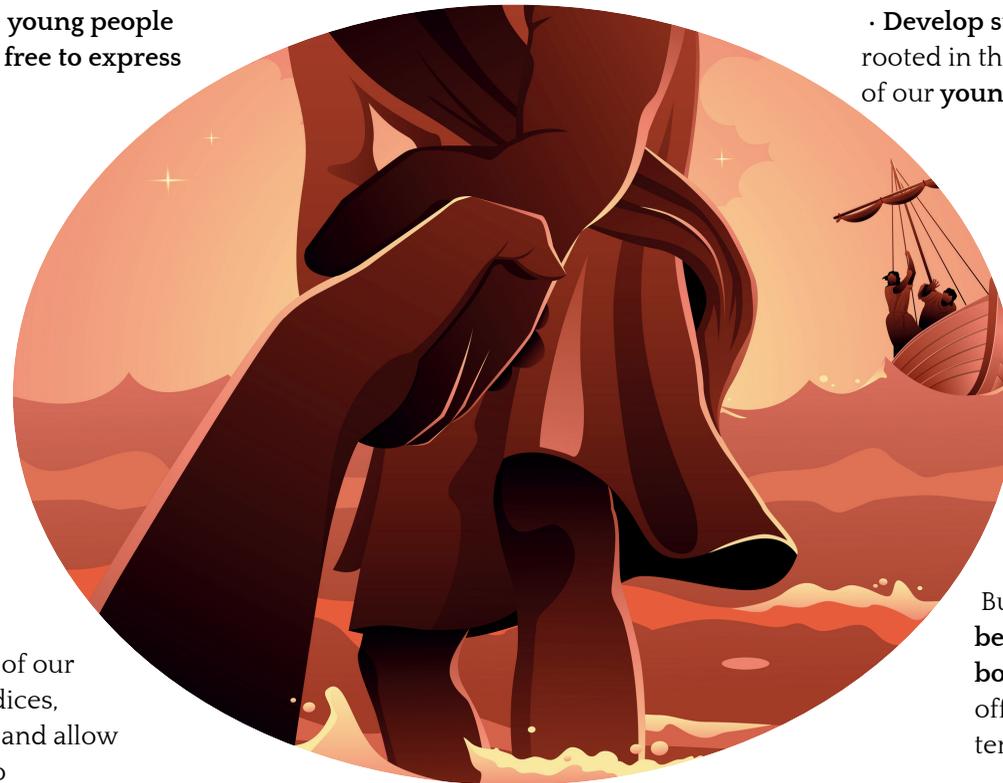
- **Establish clear mechanisms of evaluation**, so that we can measure not only **activity**, but **fruitfulness**

- **Ensure collaboration** between all levels: **diocesan offices, parishes, schools, religious orders, and regional commissions**.

Without **structure**, good intentions **collapse**.

But without **love, structure becomes rigid**. We must **build with both strength and flexibility**—offering a **hand** that is both **firm and tender**.

There is also a **growing call** for support networks for youth ministers **themselves**. Many serve in **isolation**, with **limited resources** and **overwhelming responsibilities**. They too must be **ministered to**, formed, and **strengthened**. We envision a regional network, aided by **digital tools**, that **connects leaders, shares resources, and fosters mutual encouragement**.



## THE CALL: FORMING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

We are not called to simply **improve programs**—we are called to **form communities**. **Intentional communities** that are **Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, and mission-driven**.

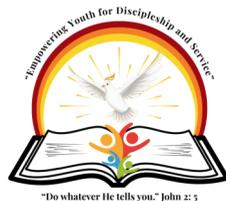
What is an **intentional community**? It is a **space where young people truly belong**. Where **faith is not imposed, but discovered**. Where **growth is not rushed, but nurtured**. These **communities** must reflect the **unity, charity, and hospitality** of the **early Church**. (Acts 2:42-46)

We envision:

- **Communities marked by holistic formation**—nurturing the **human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral** dimensions of **young people**
- **Communities grounded in collaboration**—between **parents, parishioners, clergy, educators, and community members**
- **Communities that value creativity with fidelity**—where the **faith** is never **compromised**, but always **proclaimed** in **new and compelling ways**
- **Communities shaped by empathy**—meeting **young people where they are**, without **fear**, and **walking with them** toward **Christ**

These **communities** are **intentionally cultivated**—with **care, discernment, and the courage to step out of the boat**. They require **vision, time, prayer, and investment**.

In a region as **culturally diverse** as ours, **unity does not mean uniformity**. Instead, we seek a **shared framework with local adaptations**. **One mission. Many voices. One Body of Christ**.



This is the synthesis of the conversation in the spirit of 76 leaders across the AEC contemplating on the present and future of youth ministry, at the AEC Youth Ministry Leadership Conference July 2025.



## GET IN TOUCH

We have more details to share and you have more questions to ask. Do not hesitate to contact us



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**WHAT CAN YOUR PARISH DO TO WEATHER THE STORM?**



## THE STORM

The response of youth leaders to changing landscape of Catholic Youth Ministry in the Antilles Episcopal Conference.